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The Editor and the News

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Congo: Challenge and Opportunity

One thing is clear. But for the existence and activity of the United Nations, the Congo would today be a battleground between Soviet and Western armed forces. Indeed, the conflict might have spread farther afield. Inflammable though the situation continues to be, the UN forces remain on the spot, helping to preserve what order is possible, and seeking a long-range solution which will avert a terrible conflict. The following problems must be solved:

1. General conflict between the Soviet Union and the Western powers must be avoided.

2. The Soviet Union must be prevented from keeping the Congo in chaos—must be kept from preventing a general solution.

3. Since the Congolese themselves are so deeply divided, some kind of compromise political solution—perhaps a loose federation of the various diverse parts—must be devised.

4. And the Congolese must be helped to learn how to govern themselves. Massive tutelage will be needed if the infant nation is not to collapse, but the tutelage will have to be acceptable to the Congolese themselves.

Blackmail Policy

These are not simple problems. The easement of the first—preventing large-scale conflict—will turn on Moscow's intentions, as well as the firmness and clarity of the West. It is probable that Moscow itself does not want a war, but simply wants to make trouble. Indeed, Moscow is making trouble all over the map these days, and cannot be counted on to be helpful except perhaps in the last resort against great war dangers.

Soviet policy, therefore, is again a kind of blackmail. It can only be met by firmness. The Western nations must know what they want themselves in the Congo, and must stick to it. As far as the United States is concerned, what it would like most of all is for the Congolese to run their own affairs. We would like genuine independence for the Congo. We object to Communist domination of the Congolese people. We object to the new imperialism as much as the old. If we keep on saying, to the Soviets and any others, that individual nations must keep their hands off the Congo, we are on a strong and appealing ground. In that light,

the Congo crisis is a great opportunity for the United States to expose the new imperialists to all the other nascent nations in the world.

By supporting the UN, as we have done, we can help to keep the Soviets out. Since the UN forces have already been built up to some 11,000, and since there were under 2,000 Belgian troops in the Congo at the time of independence on June 20, it would seem right to support withdrawal of the 8,000 additional Belgian troops that have been sent in during past weeks.

More Withdrawals

Brussels announces that Belgian troops have left all parts of the Congo except at two bases, and that the total number of Belgian troops in the Congo will be below 8,000 by Aug. 8, and further withdrawals are planned. This means the withdrawal of Belgian troops from Katanga, as well as elsewhere. Probably it means ending the Belgian bases, and departure of all Belgian troops.

That raises the thorny question of the future of Congo separatism. Further splintering moves, not simply the Katanga, are now under way. The Abako Party, headed by Congo President Kasavubu, has declared its lack of confidence in Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. It calls for creation of an independent government in the lower Congo around Leopoldville, and says the Congo should be transformed into a loose confederation of such independent provinces.

Katanga Premier Tshombe still insists his troops will resist the entrance of UN soldiers by force. A band of youths swept through Leopoldville Aug. 8 demanding that UN troops enter Katanga.

Thus not only is the Congo a conflict area between Communists and the Western nations, it is also a battleground of civil war. There are also tribal conflicts in various other parts of the area. How will this civil strife be avoided? It is not, apparently, civil conflict on the Korean model. There, of course, it was not a real civil war but a Communist puppet state seeking to spread Communist power over the whole nation. The Congolese civil strife is partly tribal, partly personal rivalry, partly conflict stimulated by the Belgians — who are support-

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